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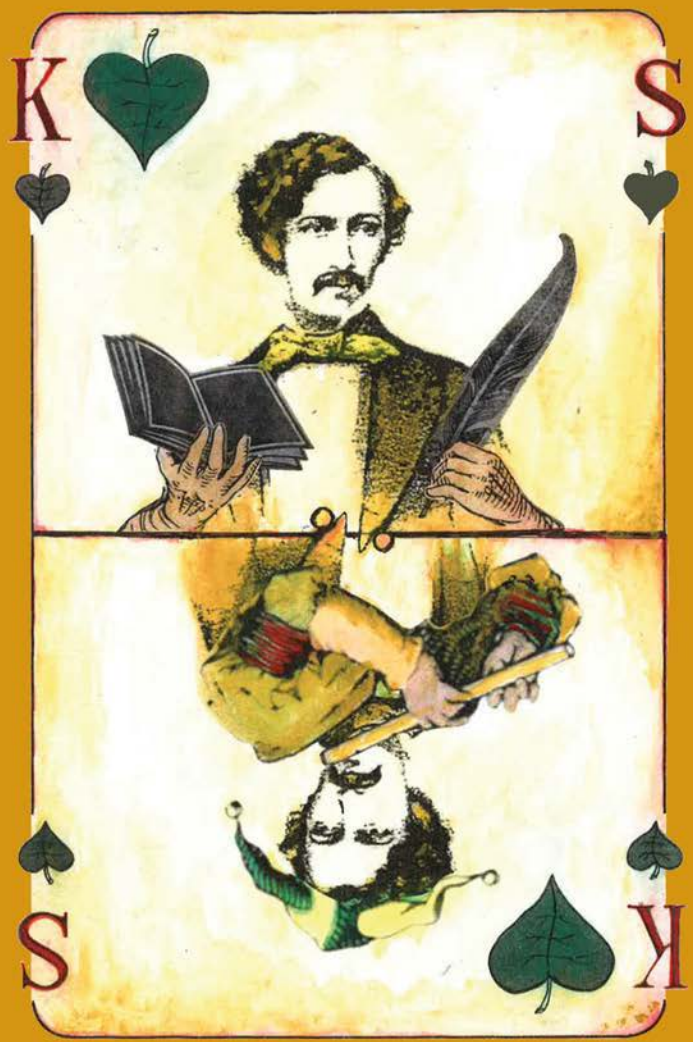
Die getäuschte Wissenschaft

Ein Genie betrügt Europa – Konstantinos Simonides

Vienna University Press



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© 2017, V&R unipress GmbH, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783847107149 – ISBN E-Book: 9783847007142

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ISBN Print: 9783847107149 – ISBN E-Book: 9783847007142

Andreas E. Müller / Lilia Diamantopoulou /
Christian Gastgeber / Athanasia Katsiakiori-
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Mit 54 Abbildungen

V&R unipress

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ISBN Print: 9783847107149 – ISBN E-Book: 9783847007142

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

ISBN 978-3-8470-0714-2

Weitere Ausgaben und Online-Angebote sind erhältlich unter: www.v-r.de

Veröffentlichungen der Vienna University Press
erscheinen im Verlag V&R unipress GmbH.

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Rektorats der Universität Wien.

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ISBN Print: 9783847107149 – ISBN E-Book: 9783847007142

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ISBN Print: 9783847107149 – ISBN E-Book: 9783847007142

Pasquale Massimo Pinto

Simonides in England: A Forger's Progress

1.

> I was much pleased with the Prospectus of the Institution. I should much like to hear those [lectures] upon Literary forgeries. There will be some detail there of the absurdities of our moon mad namesake.

These words contain a significant echo of the presence of Constantine Simonides in English society and culture in the middle of the 19th century. They can be read in a private letter that the later distinguished critic and cultural historian John Addington Symonds – then barely sixteen years old and a student at Harrow – addressed to his sister Charlotte in Bristol, in 1856. Charlotte had previously sent him the programme of the lectures to be held at the local 'Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Fine Arts' during the coming Christmas holidays of that year. The list included a couple of lectures by a Rev. Gotch on literary forgeries that particularly attracted the interest of the young Symonds, since he thought they might concern Constantine Simonides, a quasi-namesake of his. Simonides is in fact alluded to by Symonds by the teenage word-play with his own family name, in the same way he did with the ancient Greek poet Simonides of Ceos – a poet he would later translate.[1]

The letter proves that Symonds and his sister were both well acquainted with Simonides as an eccentric public figure ('moon mad') and with the outcry he had

1 The letter is published in the first volume of the only available (but imperfect) edition of Symonds' letters: Schueller/Peters 1967, no. 53, 124–125. It bears no date but it can be dated to autumn 1856 (not 1857, as indicated by the editors), since the lectures by Gotch that are alluded to were scheduled for December 15 and 22, 1856, cf. Neve 1984, 381 no. 213. Frederick William Gotch (1808–1890) was a Bible scholar and the principal of Bristol Baptist College from 1868 to 1883, cf. Brackney 2009, 259. The allusion to Constantine Simonides was not understood by the editors, who oddly referred to the ancient poet Simonides. Symonds dealt with the latter in the first volume of his *Studies of the Greek Poets*, London 1873, 146–152; in his *Memoirs* he also described the name Simonides as 'my patronymic in the isles of ancient Hellas', cf. Grosskurth 1984, 91.

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provoked at the beginning of 1856, when his name had become notorious in England in connection with the scandal of the fake Uranius manuscript. Moreover, in February of the same year "*The Athenaeum*", a popular London magazine, had published the English translation of a detailed report by the German diplomat Mordtmann, in which several swindles committed by Simonides in Athens and Constantinople a few years before were decisively exposed.[2]

The forger remained a topic of interest for the two siblings, since his name resurfaced in 1860, in another letter written by Symonds, already an Oxford student, to his sister:

> This morning, when I went to fetch the book, there was a great assemblage of distinguished people in Conington's room. I found him seated with Monro, a Cambridge man, and Henry Smith, who is the greatest universal genius Oxford has, and [William Edmund] Currey; and a Lord Strangford who has just returned from Constantinople full of the forgeries of Simonides[3].

2.

Constantine Simonides had arrived in England for the first time in December 1852, after giving up his plan to visit America[4]. His first documented appearance in London was in February 1853 and he stayed in England until November 1854. After visiting London again in the spring of 1855, he came back for a second and longer period in April 1858: he would leave the island seven years later, in 1865.

The reconstruction of Simonides' years in Victorian England relies first of all on a number of unpublished manuscript documents, the most important of which are the letters to, from and about Simonides included in the manuscript Additional 42502AB of the British Library and originally from the personal archive of John Eliot Hodgkin, probably Simonides' chief patron in England. The papers of the book-collector Thomas Phillipps and the librarian Frederick Madden that are in the British Library and the Bodleian Library of Oxford, also

2 Cf. Mordtmann 1853. Mordtmann's report appeared in English translation in *The Athenaeum* on February 23, 1856, and soon afterwards in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and in the *Journal of Sacred Literature*. It has recently been republished, together with an Italian translation, in Bossina/Canfora 2008, 123–138.

3 Schueller/Peters 1967, no. 123, 220 (in this case too, the reference to Simonides was not understood by the editors). The classical scholar John Conington (1825–1869) is referred to in the letter; he was then professor of Latin at Corpus Christi College. Percy Smythe, 8th Viscount Strangford (1826–1869), was a diplomat and a competent linguist and Orientalist, cf. Norgate/Baigent 2004. At that time, Strangford had just come back from Constantinople; in the meeting recalled by Symonds he probably reported details about Simonides' deeds in the Ottoman capital.

4 He had also announced his visit in a Boston newspaper, cf. Pinto 2010.

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deserve to be mentioned. Next is the information that can be collected from what Simonides himself wrote both in the prefaces of the works published in England, such as the *Fac-similes of certain Portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew* etc. (1861) or *The Periplus of Hannon* (1864), and in newspapers. Finally, at least three scholarly contributions must be taken into consideration: a chapter included by the amateur historian James Anson Farrer in his 1907 book on *Literary Forgeries*, based on the papers of Hodgkin; the substantial chapter devoted to Simonides by the book scholar Alan N.L. Munby in his stunning work on Thomas Phillipps, published in the 1950s (the "Phillipps Studies"); and the book about the *Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides affair* written by the New Testament scholar James K. Elliott in 1982.[5]

The years that Simonides spent in England are worth reconsidering, in my opinion, because they mark a turning point in his career as a forger and a "poisoner" of scholarship, as well as in the public reception of his person. After travelling in the East, in Russia and in central Europe, within roughly a decade he managed to build up a network of friends and supportive acquaintances in England; to increasingly attract the attention of the press; to have an authorised biography and a number of books printed in English, and by good publishers to boot; to gain access to a rich private collection of antiquities from which he extracted and published several papyri – the great novelty at the time in the field of classical scholarship; and, finally, to cause the great scandal of the Codex Sinaiticus.

3.

This is how the story began in Simonides' own words:

> I arrived in England from the Canary Islands. On the twelfth of December of last year, we docked at Liverpool, a commercial city of England, where I stayed for nearly two months. Later, on the 6th of February of this year I moved to the city where I still am, the capital of the world, London, where I also found some calm. After a few days I was already acquainted with several learned Englishmen who live in London. I have also become a regular at the British Museum: I have read, copied and translated Egyptian antiquities that can be found abundantly there, thanks to the encouragement of many learned men, whose admiration increased day by day due to the correct interpretation that I provided of those monuments. This carried on until May. On the 25th of that month, I was introduced to the Royal Philological Society, where more than five hundred members were present, all very learned men: in the presence of such a numerous assembly I displayed the manuscripts that ignorant persons proclaimed to be fake, and here nobody, after seeing them, had anything to say against their authenticity.

5 See, respectively: Farrer 1907, Munby 1956, Elliott 1982.

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These lines are from a letter of August 29, 1853 to Alexandros Lykurgos, a Greek living in Leipzig, who had been Simonides' main connection to the German academic world and whom at that time Simonides still considered a friend.[6] In this autobiographical account, we see that Simonides had quickly integrated into London's erudite circles and was allegedly admired as an expert in a new branch of knowledge, specifically for his ability to interpret the attractive antiquities belonging to the growing Egyptian collection at the British Museum. But many details about how he managed to make contact with these scholars and learned men are still missing.

On his arrival, he was undoubtedly welcomed by the long-established Greek merchant communities of Liverpool and Manchester, from whom he first received material help and practical support, as he later acknowledged in his *Facsimiles:* 'my compatriots, the Greek residents in Liverpool and Manchester, to whom I return my sincere thanks for their friendly sentiments and their many kindnesses'[7]. A few names stand out here and there in the pages of his works: Stamatis Frangopoulos, Constantinos Pappas, and above all Demetrios Rhodokanakis.[8]

Simonides' first stay in England is, as it were, a continuation of his previous activity as an international peddler of manuscripts. In February 1853, he was able to call on the librarian of the British Museum, Frederick Madden, and tried to sell the Museum some of his most singular pieces, which Madden firmly rejected, though he agreed to purchase some of the genuine materials that Simonides offered (that is, Greek manuscripts of the 14th and 15th centuries, still conserved at the British Library as Additional mss. 19386–19393). The story is very well known from Madden's own account and has been frequently cited[9]. A few months later, at the end of September 1853, Simonides tried to sell the same wares at Oxford, and here again the reaction of the then librarian of the Bodleian, Henry Coxe, gave rise to an anecdote that features frequently in accounts of Simonides in England.[10]

6 The letter, in Greek, was published by Lykurgos 1856², 58–61. Lykurgos later became archbishop of Syros and other Greek islands, cf. Skene 1877; in this capacity he visited England in 1870, and was welcomed by those Anglicans calling for Orthodox-Anglican reunion, cf. Lykurgos 1871. On Lykurgos and Simonides, see Berger in this volume.

7 Simonides 1861, 7 = Elliott 1982, 135. On the Greek communities in England, cf. Dowling/Fletcher 1915, Catsiyannis 1993, Chatziioannou 2009. Simonides later attracted the attention of another Greek who lived for a long period in England, Johannes Gennadius, cf. Pinto 2011.

8 For Frangopoulos (Chios 1815 – Marseille 1870), 'Consul at Manchester for His Majesty the King of the Hellenes' from 1867, see the printed dedication in *The Periplus of Hanno* (1864). On Pappas, a Greek merchant in Liverpool, see Simonides 1861, 33, n. 5. On the impostor Rhodokanakis and his role in Simonides' life see Müller in this volume.

9 Cf. Munby 1956, 116–118.

10 Cf. e. g. Craster 1952, 87–88.

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The news that a Greek was trying to sell ancient manuscripts to the most important libraries in the country reached the ears of the right man, namely Simonides' best ever customer, the bibliophile Thomas Phillipps[11]. The acquaintance with Phillipps was facilitated by a recommendation from Patrick Colquhoun[12], a diplomat and former Plenipotentiary in Greece. It was a turning point in Simonides' career, since that great collector was responsible for the purchase of genuine manuscripts and a large number of Simonides' creations for his own impressive library at Middle Hill, Gloucestershire and therefore for their partial survival after the dispersal of his library. Simonides paid three visits to Phillipps between the summers of 1853 and 1854 and the two remained in correspondence until 1858. The story of the relations between the forger and the bibliophile has been told in masterly detail by Munby[13].

4.

In the time between Simonides' first and second stay in England, an episode occurred which is significant on account of the effects that his activities produced there and because it led to his fame spreading from narrow circles to the wider domain. Between the summer of 1855 and January 1856, while he was in Germany, Simonides managed to persuade some German scholars, including the Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius and the enterprising classical scholar Wilhelm Dindorf, of the genuineness of a palimpsest manuscript of roughly seventy folios containing, under a layer of minuscule Greek medieval writing, the visible pale remains of the pre-existing capital Greek writing of late antiquity. The text written in this alleged *scriptio inferior* was a lost work by an ancient writer named Uranius, a work dealing with the kings and the chronology of pharaonic Egypt. Eventually, the authoritative opinions of the scholars of the Prussian Academy of Sciences led to the palimpsest being purchased by the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV for a considerable amount of money. But the situation

11 The best account of the life of Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872) can be found in Munby's 'Phillipps Studies'.

12 On Patrick Colquhoun (1815–1891) see Pollard/Pease-Watkin 2004. A diplomat, a legal writer and a linguist, he was Plenipotentiary of Hanse Towns at Constantinople, Persia and Greece and Member of the Supreme Court of Justice in Corfu from 1858 to 1861. He was the author of *The Modern Greeks considered as a Nationality* (1873). As president of the Royal Society of Literature, he dealt with Simonides in a meeting of 1889, cf. *Notes & Queries*, VII, 170, March 20, 1889, 260.

13 Munby 1956. For the sale of the manuscripts bought by Phillipps see *Bibliotheca Phillippica. Catalogue of Greek and Italian Manuscripts and English Charters. From the celebrated collection formed by Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bt. (1792–1872). New Series: Eighth Part*, London 1972, 17–26.

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deteriorated rapidly after it was discovered that the newly discovered text too often corresponded to the conjectures made by Lepsius in this field, and even to those already amended by the scholar himself. As a consequence, Simonides' abode was searched by the police and evidence of falsification was found: Simonides was arrested in Berlin on February 1, 1856 and subsequently also banned from Saxony[14].

In the meantime, Wilhelm Dindorf had sent to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press at Oxford a proposal for the publication of the whole of Uranius along with two alternative estimates of its length at '200 pp. 4to or 330 pp. 8vo'[15]. It was agreed that a specimen would be printed in advance by the publisher: *Uranii Alexandrini / de regibus Aegyptiorum / libri tres. / Operis ex codice palimpsesto edendi / specimina proposuit / Gulielmus Dindorfius. / Oxonii: / e typographeo academico / MDCCCLVI.* This *proekdosis* was exhibited on the counters of the Oxford booksellers on the very day on which Simonides was arrested in Berlin, a coincidence that led Dindorf to hurriedly write an awkward letter to the publisher asking for the sale to be stopped immediately[16]. As a result, all the copies of the pamphlet were hastily withdrawn from the bookshops, even if some had already been sold and would later become a bibliographical rarity.

We have a vivid first-hand account of the facts from a contemporary Oxford scholar, William Tuckwell, one of those learned individuals who decided, at a certain point, to concern themselves with collecting evidence and materials about the forger. He recorded the fate of Dindorf's Uranius in some (unpublished) papers. This is how he told the story some years later in a note prefacing his collection of works by and about Simonides, that is now in the British Library[17]:

> The Uranius, edited by Professor Dindorf, and printed at the Clarendon Press, was issued in February 1856: and on the very day of its publication the news arrived in Oxford that it had been discovered to be spurious. Copies had been already exposed for sale in Parker's shop, and of these seven had been sold. Four were bought by Mr Max Müller; one by Mr Jowett of Balliol; another by Mr Edwardes of | Merton; the seventh by a clerk in the employ of Messrs Parker. No other copies were sold in Oxford; and as that entire impression was immediately called in and destroyed, these seven copies, together with those forwarded to the eleven Delegates of the Press, are the only specimens of the

14 Cf. Freytag 1856 (= Bossina/Canfora 2008, 145–151). The story was recorded also in the diary of Lepsius' wife, Elisabeth, see Lepsius 1933, 179–181.

15 The information is in a letter from the philologist Robert Scott to the antiquary William Sandys Wright Vaux, dated January 26, 1863 (Oxford University Press Archive).

16 Cf. Canfora 2009, 128.

17 William Tuckwell (1829–1919), studied at New College, Oxford. He was a clergyman, a teacher and a social reformer (he styled himself a 'radical parson'). As a scholar, he was the author of biographical and popular works on Horace, Chaucer, and Spencer; his works also include a volume of *Reminescences of Oxford* (1900, 1907[2]).

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> work in existence. One of the last, including both the proof and the corrected copy, is in the library of New College; another was bought at Dr. Bliss' sale by a | Mr Stewart – the rest I have not attempted to trace. In Berlin, the sum of Ten Pounds was publicly offered for a copy shortly after its publication, but the offer did not reach, or failed to tempt, any one of the fifteen fortunate possessors. The source from which my own copy was derived I am unable to state. I obtained it, as I have obtained many a curiosity, by a lucky accident. It is a proof copy, and bears| the date of 1855. I have added the title-page as finally published in 1856. [ftnt: A complete copy of this final edition has since been presented to me by Mr Max Müller (1862)][18].

Among those who purchased copies of Dindorf's pamphlet, Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893), the renowned translator of Plato and Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford[19], and Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), the influential Orientalist and comparatist, are mentioned. The latter in particular, who had witnessed the meeting of the librarian Coxe with Simonides when he was curator of the Bodleian, secured for himself several copies of the booklet, some of which were sent to Germany. Müller maintained a strong interest in the figure of the Greek forger and would leave an interesting portrait of him forty years later[20]. Today fewer than ten copies of Dindorf's specimen, including a couple of proof copies, are extant in public libraries[21].

18 London, British Library, shelfmark: C 61 b 10. Tuckwell had already recorded these facts in a handwritten memoir of 1857 about Simonides that is at Oxford, in New College Library, ERS428: 'The news of the detection spread far and wide; and reached Oxford on the very day of the publication of Prof. Dindorf's Specimina. The volumes already issued from the Press were immediately recalled; but not before seven copies had been sold. Of these four were purchased by Professor Max Müller; one by Mr. Jowett of Balliol; and another by Mr. Edwardes of Merton; the seventh has not been traced: but with the exception of these, | and the copies, eleven in number, which had been sent to the Delegates of the Press, the whole issue was committed to the flames. The surviving volumes are therefore as rare as they are curious. The copy which this Memoir is written to accompany and illustrate, was presented to the College Library by the Rev. J. M. Holland, who received it from the Press as Senior Proctor and ex officio Delegate. It includes both the proof sheets and the amended edition; – and appended to it is a pamphlet recently published by | Simonides in vindication of himself; which re-asserts the genuineness of the Uranius Manuscript, and repeats the history of its discovery' (pp. 23–25).

19 On Jowett see Hinchliff/Prest 2004.

20 Cf. Müller 1897: at 32 he stated that he had secured for himself *six* copies of Dindorf's *Uranius*. Simonides was ironically mentioned by Müller as a forger of manuscripts in a letter to Jacob Bernays, dated March 29, 1860, cf. Müller 1902, 233. On this scholar cf. Fynes 2004.

21 Six copies have so far been traced: one in London, British Library (C.61.b.11); three in Oxford, Bodleian Library (25796 e.11 (1), 25796 e.11 (2), Clar.Press 50 a.74); one in Oxford, Sackler Library (365.URA: it is the copy already owned by the Bodleian librarian Falconer Madan and given by him to the Egyptologist Llewelyn Wyn Griffith); one in Oxford, Worcester College Library (XE.6.42(2)). Moreover, two proof copies, dated '1855', are extant: one at the University of Harvard, Houghton Library (MGC8 Si573 856ua), a gift of Francis Howard Fobes but originally in the personal library of Ingram Bywater; and one in London, British Library (C.61.b.10), the copy owned by William Tuckwell.

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5.

Simonides persisted in defending the authenticity of his fabricated Uranius. After leaving Leipzig, he lived for several months in Vienna and then in Munich. There he published a pamphlet and the first three issues of an Egyptological journal designed to defend his manuscript against the accusation of being a forgery[22]. As soon as he was back in London in April 1858, he resumed his contacts with Phillipps and tried anew to involve him in the publication of the Uranius. Phillipps expressed his willingness to help bear the cost of publication, though it seems that he later withdrew his support. Simonides then decided for a public subscription and, at the end of May, he issued a Greek 'prospectus' of the intended publication including a profile of the ancient author and a list of the first subscribers. The name of Phillipps does not appear in this list, but the project seems to have gone ahead; in October Simonides was able to write to the Baronet: 'The first book of Uranius is completely ready and if you like we may start publishing it'. This seems to be the very last trace of the project, which was never completed.[23] Nevertheless, the manuscript of Uranius was not left to moulder in Simonides' trunk but continued to be exhibited on different occasions.

This failure, along with the awareness of the blows that his reputation had suffered in England too, after his misdeeds in Athens and Constantinople were revealed, led Simonides to circulate a corrective account of his life up to his arrival in England, 'to vindicate the reputation of a man, most unjustly assailed by calumny', as the opening lines of its preface stated. This account was published in 1859 not as an autobiography but – cleverly, from a communicative point of view – as a *Biographical Memoir* written by a British citizen, a certain Charles Stewart. The author wrote, at the beginning of the work, that he was a relative of the people that Simonides first made friends with when he arrived in England.[24] However, the biographer has not been unequivocally identified. His actual existence has even been called into doubt and the name has been suspected to be an alias of Simonides, also because of the shared initials C.S.[25] However, in one of the letters preserved in the British Library Simonides does

22 *Archaeologische Abhandlungen*, I. *Ueber die Echtheit des Uranius*, München 1856; *Memnon. Archaeologische Monatschrift* redigirt von C. S. *Μέμνων. Σύγγραμμα ἀρχαιολογικὸν κατὰ μῆνα ἐκδιδόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ συγγράφοντος αὐτὸ Κ. Σιμωνίδου τοῦ Σταγειρίτου διδάκτορος τῆς φιλοσοφίας*, München 1857. About fifteen copies of the latter are scattered across European and American libraries; the British Library (P.P. 1931.d.e.a) and Athens, Gennadius Library (BB 1226.5) copies have the three issues bound together.

23 The letter is quoted in Munby 1956, 129. On the 'prospectus', cf. Canfora 2009, who also published two letters relevant to the project that are kept in Vienna.

24 Stewart 1859, iii.

25 Elliott 1982, 176.

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supply the address of a Charles Stewart in Portsdale, near Brighton, and of his brother Henry Stewart in London.[26] Moreover, one of the letters included in the Additional 42502 A is addressed to Charles Stewart and a few letters by Henry Cattley Stewart, probably an accountant by trade, are likewise extant.[27] A more accurate investigation of the letters of the Additional might help elucidate the matter. What is clear is that some misspellings in the *Memoir* look like errors of dictation by a Greek speaker and point to the involvement of Simonides himself.

6.

The real chance to garner positive interest from both scholarly circles and the wider public was provided by another collector, Joseph Mayer.

After making his fortune as a jeweller and goldsmith, Mayer had put together in Liverpool a considerable collection that included books, autographs, drawings, engravings and especially antiquities.[28] Many of these antiquities had been purchased in deference to the widespread Egyptomania of the 19th century: scarabs, masks, coffins, mummies were all part of Mayer's private museum. But another kind of object too had found its way into his collection, namely rolls and fragments of papyrus. The interest in papyri had significantly increased after important and lost texts of classical authors such as Hyperides had been recovered from papyri brought from Egypt from the beginning of the eighteen twenties onwards. Mayer, too, had secured samples of these new antiquities from dealers like Joseph Sams and Henry Stobart.[29]

In February 1860 Simonides managed to be introduced to Mayer thanks to James Smith[30], a member of the local Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, who was described by Simonides as "a philhellenist", that is to say, probably, a former supporter of Greek independence and, at the same time, an admirer of ancient Greek culture. Again, as in the case of Colquhoun who in-

26 British Library, Add. 42502 A, f. 5r, letter of Simonides to J.E. Hodgkin, April 18/30, 1861: 'ἔχει δὲ αὕτη [διεύθυνσιν] ὧδε· Mr Charles Steward [*sic*] / The Bohemians / Copperas Gap / New Shoreham Road / Portsdale / Sussex (near Brigton [*sic*]) / Ἡ [διεύθυνσις] τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἔχει οὕτως· / H. Steward [*sic*] E. / 15 Granville Square / W. / Pentonville / London'. Note that the *Biographical Memoir* was actually printed in Brighton, as shown on the back of the title-page.

27 British Library, Add. 42502 A, ff. 117–118 (S. Timmins to C.R. Stewart); ff. 151–152, 170–172, 176, 261–263, 291–296, 300–301, 306–307, 315–317, 327, 330–331 (letters of H.C. Stewart).

28 On Mayer (1803–1886), cf. Nicholson/Warhurst 1983 and Gibson/Weight 1988.

29 For Joseph Sams see Bierbrier 2004; for Henry Stobart see Bierbrier 2012, 527 and Otranto 2010, 240–241 and n. 10.

30 Cf. Simonides 1861, 5 and Gibson/Weight 1988, 53.

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troduced him to Phillipps, interest in the Greek nation and culture played a role in smoothing the way for Simonides in English society. (This was the case also with another British philhellene, Edward Masson, who Simonides befriended in these years but who was probably an acquaintance from the years Simonides had spent in Athens.[31] Masson had served as an interpreter and secretary to Admiral Lord Cochrane during the Greek War of Independence and had subsequently been Attorney General in Greece. He had been in Athens between 1841 and 1844 as professor of history and was professor of Biblical and Ecclesiastical Greek in the Presbyterian College, Belfast from 1845).

Again, the key to gaining Mayer's confidence was Simonides' presumed ability to interpret Egyptian antiquities.[32] This allowed him, soon after, to get free access also to the papyri in the collection. As we can gather from scattered references in his publications – from the *History of palaeography* of Silvestre to the *Collectiones* of the Herculaneum papyri and the editions of the Hyperides' papyri –, Simonides was certainly aware that papyrus was widely used in antiquity as a writing support. He had probably seen papyri sold on the antiquities market during his travels in Egypt. But, as far as we know, this was the first time the Greek scholar had the opportunity to handle a considerable amount of this material in a single place. The image given by Simonides of himself, as a scholar working on papyri, is not at odds with what we know about contemporary practices in the increasingly popular field of papyrology, including the improper habit of pasting papyri on paper or cloth. It is worth considering a few lines of this self-portrait in his *Fac-similes:*

> Accordingly, I thenceforth assumed the direction of the investigation, the correct transcription, and the interpretation, visiting the Museum daily for that purpose […] I began to search through the papyri in the Museum itself. These were, for the most part, so torn and damaged, lying pell-mell together, and offering neither connexion nor continuity – for the number of the fragments, the variety of the writing, the dissimilarity of the papyri, and especially the triglot character of the manuscripts, threw everything into confusion – that at first I despaired at the formidable difficulties of my undertaking. But, after resting awhile, and reflecting that great success is not to be achieved without labour, I resumed my task, and applied myself to it vigorously.
>
> First of all I separated the hieroglyphs from the Demotic writings, then the Coptic from the Greek; and again dividing them according to the periods of the writing, I commenced to adjust and adapt them.
>
> After separating the papyri into their different languages and their various subjects, and finally adjusting the comminuted fragments, I dipped a sheet of calico in water,

31 On Edward Masson (1800–1873), who is mentioned in Simonides 1861, 7, see Βαρδουνιώτης 1915. Masson translated in English the *Grammar of the New Testament* by Georg Benedikt Winer (1859, orig. publ. 1822).

32 In the same year 1860, in London, Simonides published a Greek-English treatise on Egyptian hieroglyphs (*A Brief Dissertation on Hieroglyphic Letters*).

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> stretched it on a board, and nailed it to the edges. Next, I softened the fragments in tepid water, and fastened them with paste on the frame prepared as above; others I pasted upon paper, and having completed these preliminaries, I commenced the deciphering and careful transcription, beginning my labours with the Greek portion[33].

The *Fac-similes*, printed in London by the well-known publisher Trübner at Mayer's expense, was a large format volume containing the edition of the first 'discoveries' made by Simonides among Mayer's papyri, together with lithographed colour plates. Simonides was indeed well aware of the importance of the mechanical reproduction of manuscripts, a technique in which he had apparently been trained by a Liverpool photographer, George T. Millichap:

> The discovery of Heliotypy being a necessary study, I also endeavoured to learn the art. I began first at Odessa, in 1843, at the instance of my patron, the illustrious Alexander Scarlatus Sturtza, but soon set it aside, going into the interior of Russia. But about eleven months ago, arriving from London at Liverpool, where I now reside, I was introduced by the kindness of my excellent friend Constantine Pappa, Esq., of Chios, to that distinguished man and first-rate artist of this town, G.T. Millichap, Esq., R.A. I learnt it again to the best of my ability. For out of pure good nature, and without fee or reward, Mr. Millichap undertook to instruct me, and taught me the art with the utmost clearness, for which I return him my sincere thanks. The reason why I was desirous of learning the art is, that it contributes greatly to the accurate and speedy copying of manuscripts and other antiquities, as all know. Should the electrotypic process ever be perfected, I will learn that also, not caring what my accusers say, who blame me because I have a fondness for the arts as well as other things[34].

Simonides' discoveries were texts from the *New Testament*. First of all, several fragments of the *Gospel of St Matthew*, improperly presented as the remains of a codex, with variant readings against the received version and accompanied by an astonishing subscription by a certain Nicholas the Deacon, dated to 15 years after the ascension of Christ. Besides the Gospel, fragments of the letters of James and Jude were published. Predictably, the book was well received and aroused much curiosity[35]. Geographical and historical texts would follow in the subsequent years in well-produced books, such as *The Periplus of Hannon* (London, Trübner, 1864) and Λείψανα ἱστορικά (Liverpool, David Marples, 1864). Interestingly, the Mayer papyri were also exhibited on several occasions, in Liverpool, Cambridge and London.[36]

33 Simonides 1861, 5 = Elliott 1982, 132–133.

34 Simonides 1861, 33 n. 5.

35 It is the book by Simonides with the largest number of extant copies; up to now, nearly forty have been traced.

36 In Liverpool, on October 19, 1860, during a public soirée held in the Town Hall; again in Liverpool, on November 1, 1860, at the meeting of the archaeological section of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire; at Christ's College Cambridge, at the end of 1862, on the

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Notwithstanding their popularity, the authenticity of these manuscripts was already doubted by some scholars at the time. In fact, they show features typical of forgery. They were fabricated by Simonides using pieces of white papyrus or the blank side of papyri written in demotic, for instance.[37]

The career of Simonides as a papyrologist was somehow overshadowed by the scandal concerning the codex Sinaiticus that he triggered in the columns of *The Guardian* in September 1862 by stating that he had actually written the venerable manuscript of the Bible recovered by Tischendorf at St Catherine's Monastery. A clever move, that ensured the forger would leave his mark in Victorian England and entrust his name to posterity. The whole affair has been best recounted in the 1982 book by James K. Elliott, from which a clear idea of Simonides' pervading presence in the British press during the 1860s can also be obtained.[38]

7.

The last point on which I wish to comment is Simonides' friendship with John Eliot Hodgkin, probably the closest friend that he had during the last years of his English stay. It was Hodgkin who supplied Simonides with practical and financial support and, above all, acted as mediator with a wide network of antiquarians and bibliophiles, amateur scholars, New Testament specialists, publishers and booksellers, and with the press. It is thanks to Hodgkin's commitment and care that the documents today gathered in the British Library Additional 42502AB survive.

John Eliot Hodgkin was born in Tottenham in 1829 to a Quaker family. After being educated at the local school of the Society of Friends, he apprenticed as an engineer in Ipswich. He then moved to Birmingham and later, in 1858, to Liverpool, where he was living at the time of his friendship with Simonides. He subsequently settled in London, where he founded an engineering company (the Pulsometer Engineering Company, Ltd.), which he directed until the time of his death in 1912. Besides being an engineer, Hodgkin was also an antiquarian of considerable repute: he enthusiastically collected nearly everything connected

occasion of a meeting of the British Association; in London, at the beginning of January 1863, at the seat of the Royal Society of Literature.

37 In the first years of the 20th century, when Farrer was writing, the Mayer papyri could still be seen in the Liverpool Free Public Museum, together with the tracings taken by Simonides for his lithographed facsimiles, see Farrer 1907, 56. For an updated survey see Capponi 2008 and Maraglino 2008.

38 An attempt to portray Simonides' role in the affair as honest has recently been made, from a Christian fundamentalist point of view, in a conspiracy-theory movie (*Tares among the Wheat*, 2012).

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with the fine arts, including books, coins, prints, manuscripts, *ex libris*, early English pottery etc.,[39] and was one of the oldest Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries.

Hodgkin belonged to an interesting and well-connected family. His grandfather, John Hodgkin (1766–1845), had been a well-known grammarian and calligrapher; his father John (1800–1875) was a lawyer and a preacher; his uncle Thomas (1798–1866) a famous physician and a philanthropist; his brother Thomas (1831–1913) a banker and a historian of the Middle Ages[40]. In the words of Bruce Chatwin, who devoted a portrait to a 20th century descendant of this family, the painter Howard Hodgkin, they were 'an upper-middle-class family of well-ordered minds and well-furnished houses. […] one of those puritanical, public-spirited dynasties that constitute […] 'the intellectual aristocracy of England'"[41].

Hodgkin first met Simonides on November 1, 1860 in Liverpool, at a meeting of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. On the same occasion, some of the Mayer papyri were exhibited together with the Uranius manuscript. Hodgkin was captivated by the enigmatic personality of the forger and by his ability to deal with ancient objects. Shortly afterwards, Hodgkin got Simonides accepted as a member of the Historical Society itself,[42] and thanks also to the influential members of his family, helped Simonides to be received in other learned circles and to be adopted in the network of British antiquaries and amateur scholars: the evidence of these acquaintances – with William Bollaert (1807–1876), Alexander Craig Gibson (1813–1874), Thomas Wright (1810–1877) or James Yates (1789–1871) – is to be found in the dedications on extant copies of Simonides' books presented by the author.[43]

39 His lifelong interest in collectibles is documented, *inter alia*, by the three volumes of his *Rariora* (London [1902]).

40 Thomas Hodgkin, John Eliot's brother, was the dedicatee of a copy of Simonides' *Νικολάου τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης Λόγος πρὸς τοὺς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος κτλ.* (London 1858), that is now preserved at the University of Birmingham Library (shelfmark: 281.9 NIK).

41 Chatwin 1990, 70.

42 On May 9, 1861, at a meeting of the society, Simonides read a communication 'On a gold plate, embossed with hieorglyphs, in the Museum of Joseph Mayer F.S.A. &c.', see *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, new series, I, 1861, 305–310. A copy of his *Brief Dissertation on Hieroglyphic Letters* was presented to the Society on November 21, 1861, see *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, new series, II, 1862, 176; it is now in the Library of the University of Laval, Canada (shelfmark: BS/1966/S599/1861).

43 Bollaert's collection of Simonides' works is in the Bodleian Library of Oxford (shelfmark: 1 Delta 598); Gibson's copies of the *Fac-similes* and of the *Λείψανα ἱστορικά* have come to the Ashmolean Library, Oxford, now Sackler Library, through the papyrologist Arthur Hunt (shelfmark: Papyrol 303.1 L.58 fol.); Yates' 'Simonideia' are now part of the British Library (shelfmarks: 1700b.5, 7705.ee.26(2), 7706.ee.35); the copy of the *Brief Dissertation on Hie-*

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On their first meeting, Hodgkin was certainly impressed by the Uranius. The letters in the Additional 42502 A and other documents show that this manuscript in particular assumed a central role in their relationship. After being persuaded by Hodgkin, Simonides agreed to exhibit it at a meeting of the Royal Society of Literature in London and also to part from it and leave it in the hands of an expert in microscope analysis, the chemist Henry Deane, from June 1863 to April 1864. The letters between Hodgkin and Deane register Simonides' growing annoyance as Deane's suspicion increased over the course of the analysis. Deane's investigation eventually led to a *Report* of the Royal Society of Literature in which the inauthenticity of the Mayer papyri and of the Uranius manuscript was declared[44]. This was also one of the reasons for the end of the friendship between Hodgkin and Simonides. In a letter to Deane from April 1864, Hodgkin wrote: 'Please give Simonides the *Uranius*. He has behaved so extremely badly, that I cannot take any further interest in his affairs [...]. He seems to me to be the most impracticable of human kind'.[45] After that, the Uranius palimpsest disappeared.[46]

Apparently, the two men tried to heal the rift, but important pieces of information that might provide a clearer picture of the incident are missing. The letters also reveal a worsening of relations between Simonides and Mayer, who had decided at a certain point to stop financing Simonides' publications and leave him at risk of arrest for debts and lawsuits.[47] Hodgkin did not hesitate to help the Greek on this occasion, as he had done also in other moments of illness or practical difficulty.[48]

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roglyphic Letters addressed to Wright can be found at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (shelfmark: 1961.34(13)). For a general overview of the learned circles to which these men belonged cf. Levine 1986, Richardson 2013 (the latter should be consulted cautiously).

44 *Report of the Council of the Royal Society of Literature on some of the Mayer Papyri, and the Palimpsest Ms. of Uranius belonging to M. Simonides. With letters from MM. Pertz, Ehrenberg, and Dindorf*, London 1863.

45 Henry Deane sr. (1807–1874) was a fellow of the Linnean Society of London and of the Microscopcal Society of London. His papers, including the correspondence with John Eliot Hodgkin about Simonides and the Uranius ms., are now among Heny Deane jr.'s papers at the State Library of Victoria, Australia (La Trobe Library, Box 109/4 (a)-(d)).

46 A few years later, on April 24, 1869, the journal *Notes and Queries* published a note on Simonides by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles that ended with the question: 'On behalf of Prof. W. Dindorf, of Leipsic, I have also to ask: Whether the parchment MS. of the so-called "Uranius of Simonides" is preserved in the collection of Mr. Mayer at Liverpool or elsewhere? I shall be glad to communicate to him the answer that I may receive', cf. Tregelles 1869.

47 In October 1862, a debt to Mayer had caused Simonides to be confined in the sponging house of Abraham Sloman, in 4 Cursitor Street, near Chancery Lane, cf. British Library, Additional 42502 A ff. 43r–46v.

48 More details on the friendship and collaboration between Simonides and Hodgkin can be found in Canfora 2010.

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8.

We do not know much about the very last months of Simonides in England and how he prepared his disappearance from the scene. The last dated document from England is a letter from Liverpool of March 31, 1865, in which he wrote about his plans to marry an English woman, named Miss Morland.[49] However, in January 1866 he was already in Cairo[50] and in October 1867, both Phillipps and Hodgkin received not a wedding invitation but a note from Dimitrios Rhodokanakis announcing the death of Simonides from leprosy in Alexandria of Egypt:

> My dear Sir, I have just received a letter from Alexandria of Egypt announcing the death of Doctor Simonides which has taken place there at the end of last month. Poor fellow: he died in great poverty from leprosy. May God have mercy on his soul.[51]

The news of Simonides' death was also widely reported in the British press[52]. But only two years later one of Simonides' fiercest enemies in England, the *New Testament* scholar Samuel Tregelles, informed the popular magazine *Notes and Queries* that a British clergyman had met Simonides in Russia:

> The announcement of the death of Simonides in "N. & Q." was supposed to set all questions about him in one sense, at rest; but only a few months had passed when he turned up in Russia, where the Rev. Donald Owen found him preparing for publication "Historical Documents of Great Importance in Connection with Claims of the Russian Government". Perhaps this same individual, under some other name, may make his appearance as a witness in favour of all that he produced under the name of Constantine Simonides […].[53]

The claim fits with the odd dedication by Simonides on a copy of his *Λείψανα ἱστορικά* presented to the physician and writer Alexander Craig Gibson and dated 'August 1869'.

Not surprisingly, therefore, twenty years later, the news spread of a 'second death' of Simonides, in Albania this time. *The Times* was the first newspaper to publish it on October 18, 1890:

49 British Library, Additional 42502 A, f. 110.

50 This is clear from the date of the handwritten dedication on Nicholaos Aristarches' copy of *The Periplus of Hannon*, today in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (shelfmark: R.G.Classici.III.77(int.1)).

51 British Library, Additional 42502 A, f. 345 (letter from Rhodokanakis to J.E. Hodgkin); for the letter to Phillipps see Munby 1956, 130, n. 3.

52 See, for instance, *The Daily News*, Oct. 4, 1867, 3; *The Leeds Mercury*, Oct. 5, 1867, 14; *The London Review*, Nov. 2, 1867, 503; *The Manchester Times*, Nov. 9, 1867.

53 Tregelles 1869.

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> Simonides, the notorious Greek manuscript forger, has just died in a little town in Albania. For many years past he had a most remarkable career, and as a forger of Egyptian and Syrian antiquities he stands without an equal. Among his exploits was the presentation to a committee of scholars at Athens of a manuscript of Homer written on lotus leaves which he asserted belonged to a date anterior to the Christian era. Eleven of the 12 members of the committee were convinced of the authenticity of the document, but the twelfth discovered that it was a faithful copy of the text of Homer as published by the German critic Wolff, and that the manuscript reproduced the whole of the printer's errors in this edition. M. Simonides, who succeeded in swindling Ismail Pasha out of a large sum of money for a forged manuscript of Aristotle, subsequently sold to the British Museum a false memorandum addressed by General Belisarius to the Emperor Justinian, and likewise induced the Duke of Sutherland[54] to purchase two apocryphal letters from Alcibiades to Pericles. Several of the greatest scholars of Europe were, indeed, deceived by the forgeries of this acute Greek.

At the end of the 19th century, the ghost of the forger was destined to be forgotten along with many collectibles of the Victorian age. However, before his spectre's gradual disappearance a curious story circulated in a series of American newspapers that reported the news of Simonides' death following its announcement in *The Times*. On October 27, 1890, *The Sun* of New York published a long article retracing the career of Simonides, whom it curiously referred to as 'Alcibiades Simonides' (as did the other newspapers that republished the text). The article included also the alleged report by a Vienna *Tageblatt* correspondent who had met Simonides in Corfu and had listened to the story of his 'first death'. These virtually unknown lines open a way for further exploration of the murky career of Simonides:

> One of the last meetings of the learned doctor with a man of the world occurred in Corfu a few years ago. A correspondent of the Vienna *Tageblatt* returned to his room in the Hotel St. George one evening to find on his table a card bearing the words: 'The deceased Dr. Alcibiades Simonides. Meet me on the Esplanade at midnight to learn of a matter of the greatest importance.' At the midnight meeting Simonides explained that he called himself deceased, not only because he was dead to the world, but because in a recent illness he had been pronounced physically dead, had been put into his coffin and lowered into his grave, and had been aroused by the gravel falling on the lid just in time to secure his release by a tremendous knocking and groaning. The purpose of Simonides' appointment, however, was to show a document apparently written by Leopold the Glorious, in which the Babenberger prince related in the form of a diary his experiences during the Crusades, including some highly interesting particulars of his meeting with Richard the Lion-hearted. Simonides described how he had picked up this work in Jerusalem, and had brought it away with the idea of selling it to the Vienna Academy of Sciences.

54 George Granville Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, 2nd Duke of Sutherland (1786–1861).

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